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R+D+I Project: *Towards the European Digital Space. The role of small cinemas in original version (O.V)* (ref. CSO2012-25784)

## Public Policies, Diversity and National Cinemas in the Spanish context: Catalonia, Basque Country and Galicia

### Abstract

The 2005 Unesco Diversity Convention was an inflexion point regarding protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions. In the current global context, developing cultural policies and measures to nurture such creativity becomes key issue. Moreover, in the case of small communities in a minority situation where the cultural and language situation cannot produce the means to sustain autonomously, it is crucial to drive national supporting mechanisms to reduce the brutal imbalance in flows and transnational culture exchanges, and guarantee its survival. As part of the cultural production, the audiovisual sector is of double importance; besides its positive impact on the economic sphere it plays a core role in the social construction. In fact, they are both mutually reinforcing aspects. Cinema in particular, it should not be well considered only for a local giving; it is also beneficial in terms of brining commonly held values, particular circumstances and knowledge all over the world. Films do contribute to reflect the global cultural diversity. This paper aims to explain how public cultural bodies currently interpret and translate national cultural policy into film schemes in the Spanish context. Particularly, it will look into how Catalan, Basque and Galician institutions set out to plan, develop, implement and evaluate their film policies in order to establish a national film industry with their cultural and identity specificities (nation and language).

### Keywords

**Cinema, cultural diversity, national policies, multilingual context, OV cinema**

## 1. Introduction

Based on the academic reflection about the definition of cinema of small nations, identity and minority languages, the Audiovisual Research Group eDECINEMA (University of Santiago de Compostela, USC) brings into focus the policy of the European Union (EU) and it confronts with recent policy in certain territories. The aim of this project is to analyse the cases of Galicia (Spain), Wales (UK), Finland and, by extension, the most consolidated audiovisual industries in Spain: Catalonia and Basque Country. Within the framework of European cinema in stateless nations and small nations, policies of production, visibility and diversity have been studied and it can be concluded that during the past two decades (1996–2016) interconnected peripheral systems have been drifted from “the conciliation between economic development and socio-cultural interests to the establishment of a mere economical perspective. In such context, it can be identified a response to the commercial impairment –expressed in communitarian terms– of cinema distributed and exhibited in its original version (O.V) of medium and small countries” (Ledo et al., 2016). According to the conclusions of the authors Ledo, López and Pérez:

“Audiovisual policies analysed in Finland, Wales and Galicia demonstrate that stateless nations do have bigger difficulties to construct the territorial tag of ‘national cinema’ because of their significantly lower budgets and much dependency on state policies. Additionally, we find correlation between institutional investment in promotion and distribution and a positive impact on box office, nationally in particular. Thus, Finland’s effort to strengthen these elements is clearly reflected on the success of its cinema. Meanwhile, in the cases of Wales and Galicia, the lack of attention to distribution and promotion factors condemns home production to invisibility in the inside as well as in the outside of its borders. Therefore, the absence of territorial cultural and linguistic diversity policies in the three countries here analysed contributes to the bigger production of films in hegemonic languages and makes more difficult the survival of films in Welsh and Galician” (2016: 327).

Along with this research overview (taking Europe as a whole and the specific cases of Finland and Wales), this paper seeks to look deeper into the Spanish context already addressed by the funded research project of eDCINEMA through Galician case. However, the objective of this research will be focused on the comparison process of Galicia and those Spanish territories being the first in developing national audiovisual policy with a stress on cinema. That is, Catalonia and Basque Country.

The 2010 Catalan Cinema Law preamble stated as principles those of 2005 Unesco Diversity Convention. Among others, its main aims were to “guarantee linguistic access” and raise exhibition rate of Catalan-language films up to 50%. However, the European Commission denounced this law as opposed to free competence criteria (art. 56) and requested its withdrawal. As a consequent, foreign films dubbed into Catalan have decreased 33.24% and O.V films with Catalan subtitles almost disappeared. Even if Catalonia has a film production per capita higher than France (10.6 vs. 2.8 per million) there is no access to linguistic diversity in cinema.

Basque cinema’s economic structure was mainly developed thanks to the Basque Government’s Audiovisual Funding Act in 2007<sup>1</sup> (107/2007). In addition to it, important agreements and additional film supporting initiatives have been promoted during the 2000s. The White Paper for Basque Audiovisual Sector (2003), where the Basque Government together with several related agents established the minimum production conditions for the local audiovisual development. One year after, Basque Plan for Culture (2004) was drawn in

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<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, in 2013 the Government of Iñigo Urkullu (PNV/EAJ) eliminated this funding scheme with an annual budget execution of 1 million Euros.

order to determine the future course of national cultural industry. Last but not least, the first collaborative project was agreed among IBAIA, EPE-APV (the two existing Basque Producers' Associations) and ETB (Basque Autonomous Public Television) aiming at guarantying the production of at least two Basque-language fictional feature films every year. These specific schemes have led to the flowering of films -particularly in Basque- and strengthening of technical and artistic muscle of the sector. However, due to a lack of promotion and exhibition strategy, achieving sufficient response from the audience as well as recognizing the worth of Basque-language films remains as pending coursework.

In the case of Galicia, the development of national audiovisual policy as well as its difficulties can be interpreted through the changes in the regulatory framework together with the implementation of many production and distribution initiatives. The 9/2011 Public Audiovisual Media Law introduced production process amendments to the previous 6/1999 Galician Audiovisual Law in order to establish the general principles for the audiovisual activity, institutional course and sectors objectives. Regarding distribution, the most decisive actions were the Support Plan and Enhancement for Film Production (2008-2010) - which increased its budget in 13 million Euros-, the attempt to improve visibility of Galician films through an alternative movie theatre network (such as Cinemas Dixitais and the Rede Galega Cinemas) and the creation of *Flocos.tv* Internet platform (converted nowadays into *Canle.tv*).

## 2. Hypothesis, aims and method

Despite the differences of Galician, Catalan and Basque national cinemas, in this first approach it can be detected in all cases a lack of distribution and promotion policy strategically integrated into the digital sphere, together with technological innovation problems due to economic constraints. In this context, contradiction between the diversity principles ratified by the Unesco in 2005 and the limitations introduced by the European Union liberal policies as well as its consequences define the main hypothesis of this research work. Do European audiovisual policies take into consideration the production conditions of cinema in small nations? Which is the current situation of national cinemas in the Spanish context? What are the recent policies implemented and results obtained in the cases of Galicia, Catalonia and Basque Country? Which are the future challenges for European and national public policies?

The main objective of this research is to analyse the public policies and socio-economic elements implied in stateless national film development, in Spain. According to their territorial nature and governing status (defined as historical autonomous communities), the social sense of belonging to a stateless nation this communities have as well as their minority language, this paper will focus its attention more specifically to the cases of Catalonia, Galicia and the Basque Country.

As far as there are different administrations implied (three Autonomous Communities, a central state and the European Union), we will look into the initiatives and practices of public bodies related to the promotion and visibility of films in these communities with a minority-language situation. Thereafter, we will cross findings through the European (Creative Europe Program) and UNESCO (Diversity Convention) diversity policies and test the consistency of those practices so that weaknesses, insufficiencies and obstacles for the visibility and accessibility of such cinemas are detected.

Regarding methodology, firstly, it will be based on literature review; in particular, on the revision of laws, European directives, public initiatives, subsidies and statistics related to the object of research. Secondly, the analysis of each case will be carried out in order to highlight three central aspects: film production and distribution situation; recent territorial film policy, agreements and support; and, finally, main problems.

Our perspective is strongly defined by the idea of cinema as a capital cultural element in order to create specific socio-communicative spaces, defined by an own symbolic, economic, cultural and linguistic environment thus, cinema as one of the main cultural operators to build the national imaginary. In the current global context, however, when public policies should support even more specifically the production and visibility of those films, stateless nations occupy a marginal position within cultural industries. Still more, as recent research works have evidenced, European diversity policies prioritize the state-nation as almost the only operator (Ledo et al., 2016).

This research is a result of the R+D+I Project entitled *Towards the European Digital Space. The role of small cinemas in original version* (ref. CSO2012-35784) led by the Universidade de Santiago de Compostela (USC) which comprises and disseminates the data of the period 2008-2012. In addition, the two legal landmarks analysed in this project and basis of the present paper are: the 2020 Digital Agenda, promoted by the European Union and the UNESCO declaration about Promotion and Protection of Cultural Diversity in Cultural Expressions (2001-2005).

### 3. Catalonia: a failed Cinema Law

2000-2012 was a troubled period for Catalan Cinema. The economical crisis caused budgets cut far beyond the 50% in public funding devoted to promote national film industry; in addition, the number of employees as well as enterprises was reduced drastically. In the end of 2012 exhibition of Catalan films or Catalan native-language version films was the same as in 2008. Only biennium 2010-2011 resulted positive due to Catalan Cinema Law. This law, based on the principles ratified by the Unesco Diversity Convention in 2005, contributed to increase the number of spectators for Catalan O.V films, even surpassing films dubbed into Catalan. It was focused on funding fewer films but with higher budgets and promoting more Catalan-language on screen, even if dubbed.

#### 3.1. Policies, agreements and support

The Catalan film sector is regulated by the 2010 Catalan Cinema Law, which set the main aims to “guarantee the linguistic access” as well as to increase the distribution of films shot in Catalan language. However, considering it as opposed to the free competence criteria defined in article 56, the European Commission denounced this initiative in 2014. Since then, the number of films dubbed into Catalan has been reduced as well as O.V films with Catalan subtitles. The 2010 Catalan Cinema Law presented the following most important aspects:

1. It was the first official document based on the 2005 Unesco Diversity Convention
2. Due to the digital context, it was focused on distribution (creating a public-private network for exhibition) by prioritizing the original version of films with Catalan subtitles. According to it, almost 50% of films should have been in Catalan language (dubbed or subtitled)
3. It suggested the amending of linguistic or cultural misrepresentation introduced by market course

But this Law was created within a complicated social context in Catalonia: the territory was hit by the economic crisis; 21% VAT was established in September 2012 by the Spanish Government for the cultural goods; there were different opinions on the new law among private exhibitors and the European Commission considered it as opposed to free

competence criteria (art. 56)<sup>2</sup>. As a consequence of these events together with the change in the autonomic government, the Catalan Cinema Law was drastically transformed and the essential aims were not accomplished, neither the 7% of Catalan cinema screenings for 2012. European Commission assessed that Catalan Cinema Law was against European free market; nevertheless, the quota system established by this law did not limit the screenings of European films but the American. What is more, American movies invaded Catalan cinemas and ticket sales for American films oscillated 70–55% in 2008–2012.

Hence, this Law has not been developed and was renegotiated by private distributors (Fedicine), exhibitors and audiovisual business agents (Gremi d'Empresaris de Cinema de Catalunya). The Law and agreement focused on public funding for Catalan-language versions resulted in an increase of dubbing versions. Finally, the Law was removed from content in 2012, when the Catalan Government made a radical budget cut of 52.64%. It is even more dramatic if we consider that funding budget for cinema had already been reduced in 2011. Production policy also presented changes, since it was supporting fewer productions and focusing on long-run projects with bigger budget and higher impact like *Pa negre* (Agustí Villaronga, 2010), *Eva* (Quique Maíllo, 2011) and *El Bosc* (Oscar Aibar, 2012) (Caballero, 2012: 101).

In order to increase public promotion for audiovisual productions, in July 2014 the Catalan Government approved a law project to impose a new tax to the Internet providers in order to get extra 20.5 million Euros and promote home production as well as distribution – specifically digital production– taking into consideration the “cultural exception”. The reasons exposed were related to the radical budget reduction, which made the Catalan Audiovisual sector “non-competitive in the global market”. This initiative also revealed 50% of reduction in public funding for cinema as well as for the audiovisual. Therefore, the attention to the digitalisation it is justified by the current 52% of Catalan cinemas exhibiting analogically.

In addition to it, the Strategic Plan Cultura Catalunya 2021 proposed the general objectives for culture, analysed the situation of the different production fields but it did not specify lines of research regarding the field of cinema.

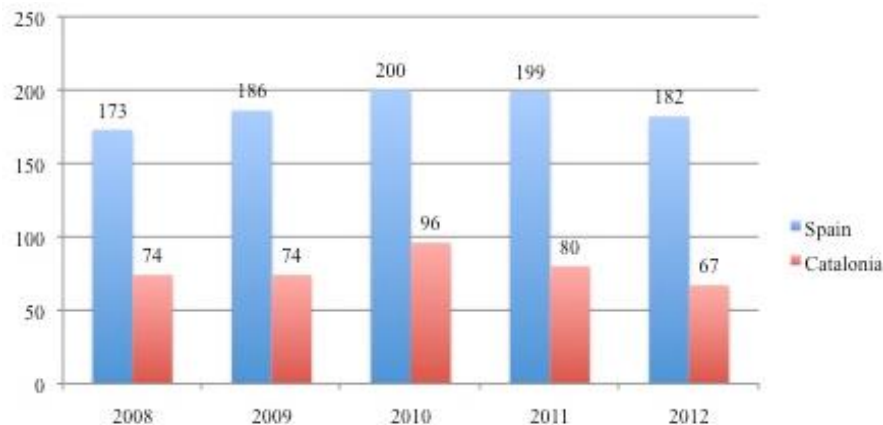
### 3.2. Catalan-language film production and distribution

2010 Catalan Cinema Law was focused on linguistic normalization. Catalan should be the common language in cinema by means of funding, dubbing and subtitling but also with a specific production policy: fewer films funded but with a more international nature and prominent character. From 2008 to 2012 Catalan film production decreased its importance in the Spanish context, from 42.7% in 2008 to 36.8% in 2012. The only exception was in 2010, when Catalan production supposed 48% of the Spanish total production. Instability was the tone during this period.

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<sup>2</sup> The European Commission states in June 2012 that Catalan Cinema Law was discriminatory because European Productions would support an extra budget imposition: from 2,000 Euros to 77,000 Euros and it should be spent in order to promote dubbing or subtitles.

**Figure 1.** 200-2012 Films produced in Catalonia



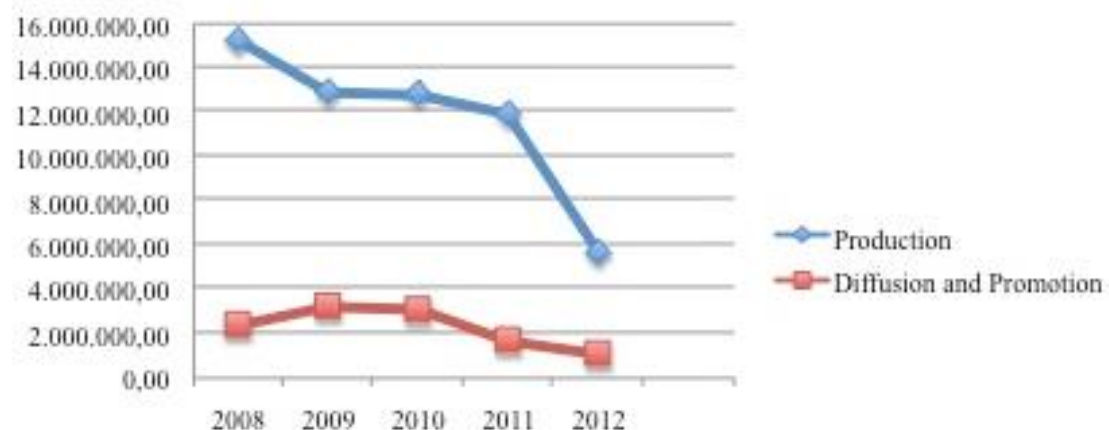
Source: IDESCAT

Changes in the productive sphere could explain part of this instability. Reduction and concentration of producers was 5% in television and 4% in cinema from 2008 to 2010<sup>3</sup>.

Catalan audiovisual companies constitute 21% of the total Spanish enterprises and this big number is explained by the atomization and non-regular production. In fact, in 2011 only three enterprises (excluding TV3 Autonomic public TV<sup>4</sup>) produced more than 3 feature films: Castelao Pictures, Eddie Saeta and The Kraken Films.

Audiovisual public funding was drastically reduced during this period. In 2008 public administration devoted 15,233,166 Euros to the film production and only 5,644,865 Euros in 2012. The biggest cut was registered between 2011 and 2012: a budget reduction of 52.6% for production and 36.4% for the promotion and diffusion of films.

**Figure 2.** 200-2012 Public funds devoted to production, promotion and diffusion.



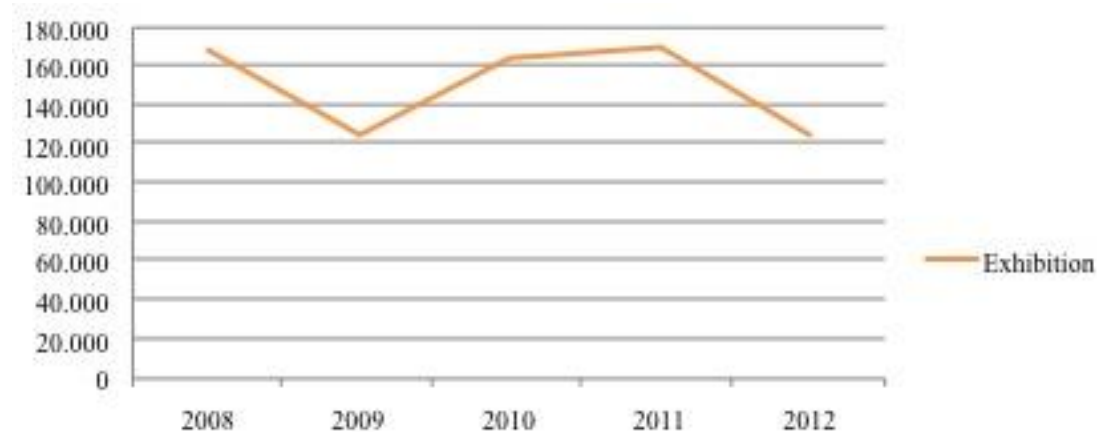
Source: IDESCAT

<sup>3</sup> Penteo and Taula d'Entitats pel Foment de l'Audiovisual Català. *Estudi del sector audiovisual a Catalunya 2013*. ICEC, June 2013, 44-47.

<sup>4</sup> TV3 is obliged to invest 5% of its total annual turnover in film production. As a consequence, in 2011 it participated in 17 films.

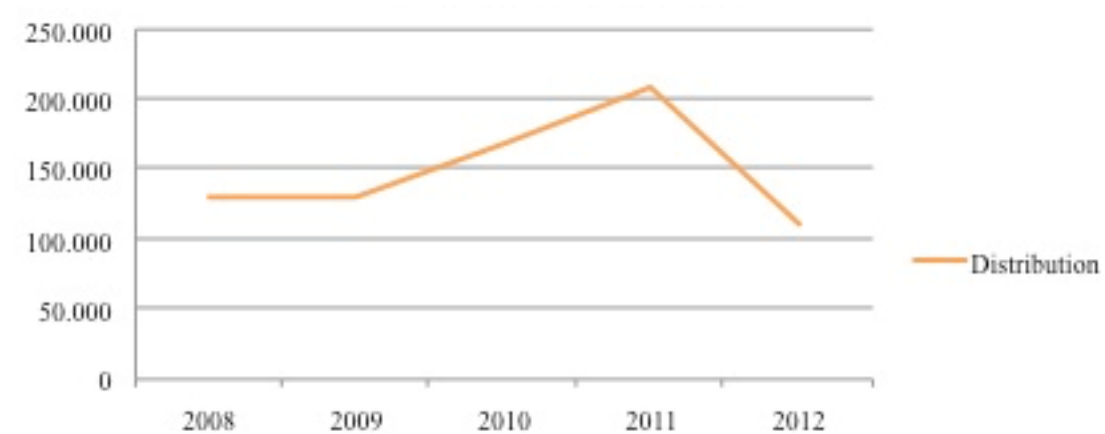
Production, distribution and exhibition business fell down radically in 2009; there was a positive rise in 2010–2011 but it finally decreased again in 2012. The reason of this positive biennium could be related to the effects of the Catalan Cinema Law and the premiere of some strong Catalan productions during 2010–2011 as *Pa Negre* (Villaronga, 2010), awarded with the Spanish Premios Goya and Premis Gaudí and Catalan-language O.V.

**Figure 3.** 2008-2012 Business Vol.: Exhibition



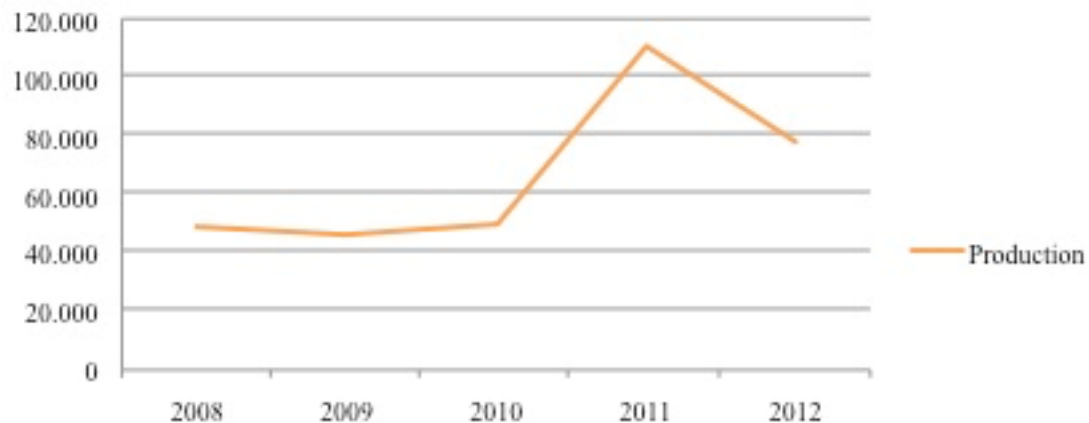
Source: IDESCAT

**Figure 4.** 2008-2012 Business Vol.: Distribution



Source: IDESCAT

**Figure 5.** 2008-2012 Business Vol.: Production

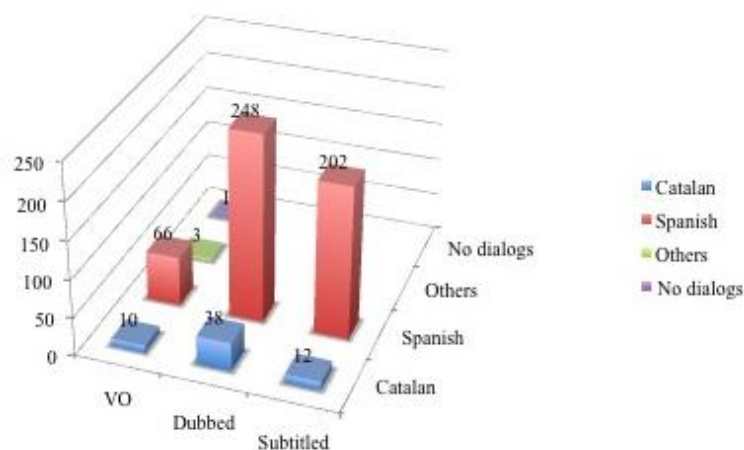


Source: IDESCAT

The Catalan public administration has collaborated in 23 films considered to be important for “the consolidation of an own cinematography to promote the Catalan cultural and linguistic values”. Nevertheless, the requirements to apply for subsidies are just those related to the filmmaker origin or the contribution the film may have in the strengthening of the “industrial network”.

Surprisingly, Catalonia has a high film production per capita: in 2011 this data was of 10.6 films within one million people. It is notably high if we compare it with Spanish (4.2), French (2.8) or German (2.3) numbers<sup>5</sup>. The Catalan National Council for Culture and Arts (CONCA) analysed these numbers and concluded that it is not an indicator of the industry’s strength considering the low screen quota: fewer than 10%<sup>6</sup>. In consequence, films do neither have a solid distribution nor rational economic return.

**Figure 6.** Features released in Catalonia by language in 2012



Source: ICEC, 2013

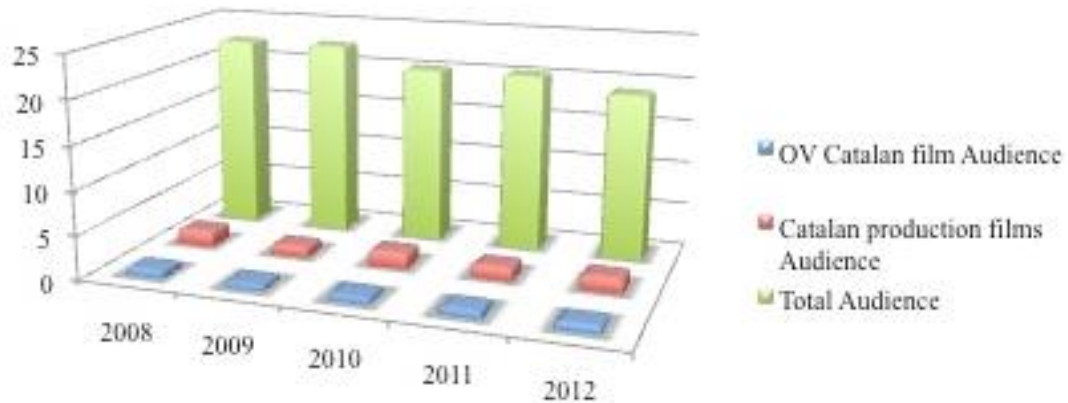
<sup>5</sup> CONCA; “Cinema i audiovisual” en *Crisi, incerteses, sinergies. Estat de la cultura i de les arts. Informe de la CONCA 2012*; January 2013, page 22.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*



Audience reduction in Catalonia in 2008-2012 was about nearly two million people, according to IDESCAT. Nevertheless, attendance of Catalan films and O.V Catalan films remained constant, with a reduction in 2009. Audience with a preference on Catalan films is minor but reflects loyalty.

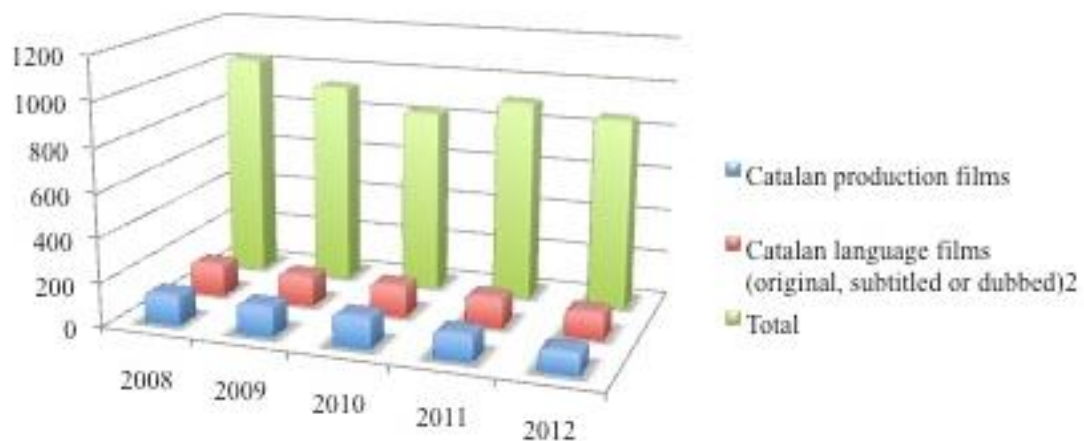
**Figure 7.** Audience in Catalonia by language and origin 2008-2012



Source: IDESCAT

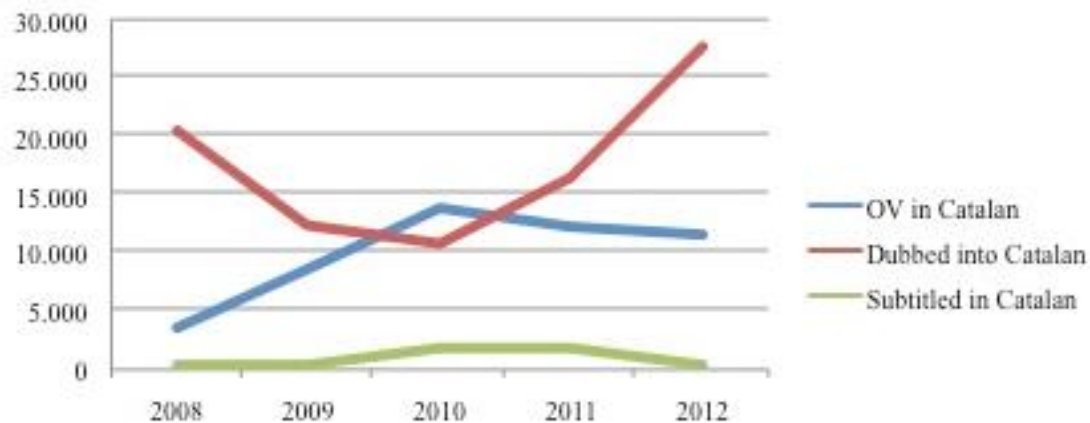
The number of Catalan productions fell constantly since 2008. From 137 films produced in 2008 to 141 in 2010, 120 in 2011 and, finally, only 98 in 2012. As a consequence, the same audience was distributed among fewer films.

**Figure 8.** Screened films in Catalonia by language and origin 2008-2012



Source: IDESCAT

**Figure 9.** Screenings by linguistic version 2008-2012



Source: IDESCAT

O.V Catalan films rose up in 2010, the same year Catalan dubbed films fell down to its minimum. 2010 is the year of the strongest conflict around Catalan Cinema Law. The *Gremi d'Empresaris* (Producers Association) refused to accept linguistic quotas and the Generalitat (autonomous government) penalized those not accomplishing the law. Consequently, in February 2010 there was a lock-out of commercial movie theatres in Catalonia. American *majors* also refused to distribute the same number of copies dubbed into Spanish and Catalan, they intensified some pressure measures as reducing the number of Catalan dubbed films released, as we can see below in the graphics. Only in 2011 the number of Catalan dubbed films began to increase again.

Catalan subtitled screenings are almost symbolic; in 2012 there were only 400 screenings. Even if the percentage of subtitled screenings is minimum (maximum was reached in 2010 with 6.81% and minimum in 2012 with 0.99%), the number of films with Catalan subtitles is clearly higher (in 2010 18.8% of the total of films screened were Catalan subtitled and in 2012 16.67%). The conclusion is that film diversity goes along with linguistic diversity. Film archives, festivals, special sessions are Catalan subtitled screenings, having concern for the original language of the film and the diffusion of the native-language.

This situation happens in a context of production hegemony: 68% of the films screened in Catalonia were produced in the USA and only 6.4% of them in Catalonia. What is more, the Trade Audiovisual Associations took up a stance against the Catalan Cinema Law and said that audience linguistic and cultural preferences cannot be changed radically. However, they were also asking for public subsidies to dub the American productions at the same time as invading their screens.

The origin of the majority of the films screened is related to the poor distribution strategy as well as to the lack of attention of public policies to avoid distribution and exhibition inequalities. Currently, there are 15 enterprises dominating distribution in Catalonia, who distribute 40% of the films and obtain 90% of the total income. In this context, the American majors over control the totality of the screens and do not let enough space to independent distributors for an equal distribution of films. CONCA, on his behalf, states that these independent distributors are the only ones who could guarantee diversity<sup>7</sup>.

One of the most interesting proposals of the Catalan Cinema Law was the creation of a semi-public Network of Screens in order to improve the diffusion of Catalan, authorial and

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, page 23

European films. This initiative would contribute to filmic and linguistic diversity. During the period of this research Catalan screenings were moving from 0.99% to 6.8%; but films released in Catalan-language were between 16.7%–18.8%, thus, we can conclude that authorial as well as artistic films are strongly linked to the linguistic diversity.

In conclusion, Catalan distribution and exhibition policies are just restricted to film festivals and do not bring productions to a massive audience, so they are abandoned in the last and most important stage of visibility. In fact, the 2012 CONCA diagnosis stressed the big importance of “reformulating subsidies in order to adapt them to the new exploitation windows”.

#### **4. Basque Country: promotion as pending coursework**

In the past decade there have been introduced a significant number of initiatives to promote the production of national cinema with a special attention to Basque-language films. For the first time ever such public policy has led to the average annual production of two feature fictional films in this language. Presently, the strengthening of technical and artistic muscle in Basque-language cinema is a fact. However, the lack of audience for such films remains as pending coursework.

##### **4.1. Policies, agreements and support**

According to the Basque Audiovisual White Paper (2003), the local sector generates 1% of the Spanish Audiovisual total income. It is complicated to give the exact numbers on the economic dimension of the sector, but according to Basque (EUSTAT) and Spanish (INE) Statistical Offices, we can estimate approximately 600 production companies employing more than 3,000 people: 0.4% of the Basque Autonomous Community current working population.

Due to its short continuous production trajectory as well as its minority situation and economic constraints, the Basque audiovisual sector is to a large extent dependent on national supporting policy and public TV contribution. In this context, the focuses of the Basque Governments’ aid lines are primarily addressing two fields: the creative and production processes of audiovisual works. In addition to it, there is also a positive discrimination on the subsidy requirements by giving extra value to Basque-language projects. The main aid schemes are the following:

- Script development
- Short film, documentary, fictional and animation feature film production
- Promotion and advertising of fictional and animation feature films
- Access to the EU and Latin American film copies for cinema theatres

Specific initiatives towards the visibility and accessibility of films in the Basque language are also running at the moment. For instance, the objective of Zinema Euskaraz (Cinema in Basque, managed by the public entity Zineuskadi) programme is to make a selection of Basque and Spanish films (animation, fictional and documentary) accessible to the people in the Basque language. This initiative also contributes to the promotion of cinematographic values in general and the use of the language as a vehicle of cultural communication and standardization within leisure and entertainment. However, not all the Basque-language film production is included in this catalogue, not even the most successful features released in the last decade (*Aupa Etxebeste!* (2005) or *Loreak* (2015) for instance). In short, Zinema Euskaraz allocates the following actions:

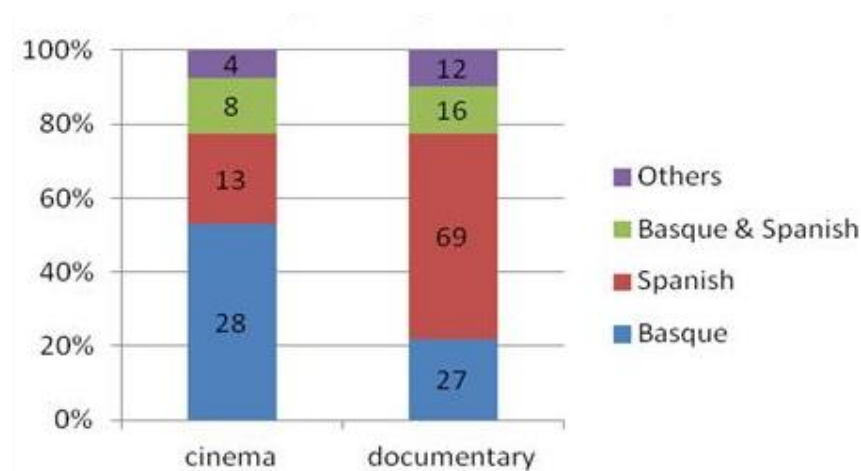
- 1) Commercial Basque-language cinema premieres
- 2) Commercialization of DVDs
- 3) Online streaming in [www.eitb.com](http://www.eitb.com) and [www.kulturklik.net](http://www.kulturklik.net) (in collaboration with the Basque Autonomic public TV ETB)

- 4) Film diffusion in the local theatres
- 5) Special cinema projections at schools

#### 4.2. Basque-language film production and distribution

According to Figure 11, during 2009-2011, the use of Spanish language was superior to the use of Basque among the number of documentary production companies; whereas cinema companies primarily chose Basque. While the 53% of these companies' production was shot in the minority language, only 22% of documentary production was in the same language. On the contrary, Spanish language is used in 56% of these companies' audiovisual works while only in 24.5% of the cinema production companies' results.

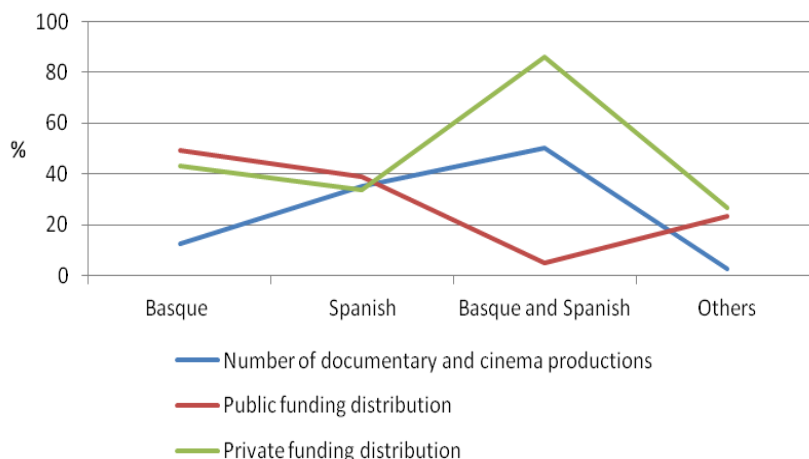
**Figure 10.** O.V of the documentary and cinema works produced in 2009-2011



Source: Basque Observatory of Culture, 2013

Aiming at analysing if the funding source distribution has to do with their language choice, we have correlated such figures from 2007 (since there is not present data) in the graphic below. As Figure 11 states, on the one hand there is a clear relation between private funding and Basque and Spanish-language production, where companies have preferred not to produce only in the Basque language indicating possible commercial reasons. But on the other hand, considering the level of private funding in such cases is very similar, it can be said that works fully shot in Basque have not been done only because of public funding. Therefore, language choice would reflect producers' natural decision making to a very high degree:

**Figure 11.** Correlation between language choice and funding distribution in 2007



Source: Basque Observatory of Culture, 2010

Regarding distribution, there is no database where the O.V of films released in the Autonomous Community can be consulted. However, if we have a look at the report on Basque theatres (Basque Observatory of Culture, 2010), out of 189,774 sessions only 3% (5,785) have been programmed in the Basque language. Moreover, the majority of it (94%) had taken place in private theatres thus, where the highest number of sessions per year is usually allocated (181,776 in 2010), mainly commercial feature films are screened and located at the cities of Bilbao, Donostia and Gasteiz. However, in some way, programming intensity could also be reflecting such result.

In this context, many filmmakers have reported that films in the Basque language are not usually scheduled in good conditions and are pushed into the background. In order to face this problem and the fewer attendance at cinemas each time, authors have had to explore and put into practice other ways of distribution such as municipal cinema tours and *event-projections* followed by the director and main actor(s) live talk. Although they are in trial period, these activities have already obtained excellent response. The Basque filmmaker Juanjo Elordi thinks that this is because of the highly valued it is the presence of the director by the audience, who is avid for national cultural references (Manias-Muñoz et. al, 2013).

The 2011 *Zineuskadi* report on Basque Municipal Cinemas Network states the majority of halls have only one screen with an average capacity for 400 people (Zineuskadi, 2011). Among the number of cases analysed (20), however, the average programming percentage for European cinema is of 37%; 65% of it composed by Spanish films and 34.8% coming from other places in Europe.

Asking in an open way for the type of cinema programming regularly, commercial cinema presence is superior to the rest (34%); followed by children's (22%) and *cine forum* (18.5%). In this respect, surprisingly national cinema represents 1.8% of their total programming.

Added to this, it is important to note that still 43.7 of 45 cinemas do not have installed any mechanism for subtitles. If they have done so anytime, it has been because the film was already prepared for it. Finally, digital equipment appears in 21% of the halls.

#### 4.3. Promotion: Pending coursework

Due to the lack of interest of non-Basque distribution companies for Basque-language movies (Table 1) and the good results that many of these movies have already experienced in

many film festivals (*80 egunean* (2010), *Loreak* (2014) and *Amama* (2015)) are an example of that), in the recent years Basque filmmakers have showed a strong interest for international festivals. In Jon Garaño Basque filmmaker's words, this is because they believe professional recognition will come from such via, since current public policies neither recognize the worth of home production nor spread it to the Basque community. In addition, once the film is completed, filmmakers and producers not only came across with serious promotion difficulties related to the lack of managerial structures and knowledge, economic constraints and personal exert, but also with the still present dislocation between the Basque-language community and its cultural production clearly reflected on last decade attendance numbers (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Film, Box office and Distribution Company of Basque-language films 2005-2014

Film title	Year	Attendance	Box office (€)	Distribution Company
<i>Aupa Etxebeste!</i>	2005	71,972	341,504	Barton Films
<i>Kutsidazu bidea, Ixabel</i>	2006	45,539	212,724	Orio produkzioak
<i>Eutsi!</i>	2007	26,463	126,766	Barton Films
<i>Ander</i>	2009	655	2,828	The society comunicacion
<i>Sukalde kontuak</i>	2009	4,996	27,183	Barton Films
<i>Zorion perfektua</i>	2009	6,282	33,682	Barton Films
<i>80 egunean</i>	2010	22,177	122,415	Barton Films
<i>Izarren argia</i>	2010	25.228	133,876	Barton Films
<i>Zigortzaileak</i>	2010	4,513	18,532	Alokatu
<i>Urteberri on, Amona!</i>	2011	31,745	177,531	Barton Films
<i>Bi anai</i>	2011	3.477	19,057	Orio produkzioak
<i>Arriya</i>	2011	11,704	59, 324	Alokatu
<i>Bypass</i>	2012	39,009	184,448	Barton Films
<i>Baztan</i>	2012	14,941	93,944	Lazo Visual
<i>Dragoi ehiztaria</i>	2012	30,442	126,328	Barton Films
<i>Amaren eskuak</i>	2013	6,401	30,123	Barton Films
<i>Alaba zintzoa</i>	2013	1,165	5,948	Barton films
<i>Loreak</i>	2014	49,873	264,914	A contracorriente films
<i>Lasa eta Zabala</i>	2014	64,377	325,936	Barton Films
<i>Txarriboda</i>	2015	2,507	12,397	Barton Films
<i>Amama</i>	2015	43,973	227,214	Golem Distribución

Source: ICAA

## 5. Galicia: a self-distribution reality

In the case of Galicia, the development of audiovisual policy and its difficulties can be interpreted through the changes in the regulatory framework and the implementation of action lines in the areas of production and distribution. The 9/2011 Public Audiovisual Media

Law made amendments to the previous 6/1999 Law of Galician Audiovisual related to the production process and settled the general principles for the audiovisual activity and institutional action. Regarding distribution, the most decisive actions were on the one hand the Support Plan to Enhance Film Production 2008-2010, which improved the budget with 13 million Euros; and on the other hand, the attempt to improve Galician films' visibility through the network of alternative movie theatres (such as Cinemas Dixitais and Rede Galega Cinemas) and the Internet (with the creation of Flocos.tv platform -nowadays converted into Canle.tv-).

### **5.1. Policies, agreements and support**

The Communication from the Commission on the state aid for films and other audiovisual productions stressed the importance of promoting accessibility to national cinema and it specifically pointed out the need of working on this field during the whole production process. That is, from the designing of the project to its distribution:

“The aim of protecting and promoting cultural diversity through the audiovisual production in Europe will only be possible if these works reach the audience. Aid schemes reduced to the production of films may provide the means to stimulate new titles, however, neither would guarantee a suitable distribution nor promotion of the audiovisual works. For that reason, supporting mechanisms including all the creative process of film would make a greater contribution to its public diffusion” (EC, 2013: C 332/4).

Despite the requests of the Galician audiovisual sector for its consideration within the Galician Audiovisual Law (6/1999), public policies have repeatedly refused such recommendation. The first Strategic Plan for the Galician Audiovisual Sector 2002-2005 stated that public policies should support the production and distribution of films and also stressed the Galician film exhibition weakness (Agapi, 2001: 104). This problem has had a changeable public commitment during the past 15 years: the support to the production and exhibition of films is separated from economic, commercial and industrial subsidies awarded by the Autonomic Cultural Organism (Conselleria de Cultura- Igape).

The Galician writer and cinema researcher Miguel Anxo Fernández highlighted in the Galician White Book of Cinematography and Visual Arts the big importance of a strong distribution and exhibition strategy to succeed in the consolidation of the audiovisual industry. He also detected a lack of awareness from the institutions' regarding the protection of national cinema and making it visible to the global context (Galician White Book of Cinematography and Visual Arts, 2004: 300).

In 2010 the public funding for films' distribution and exhibition was eliminated. During 2008 and 2010 the Support Plan to Enhance Film Production only funded production. As mentioned previously, this initiative made a contribution of 13 million Euros to help in the production process of films; however, distribution and exhibition were excluded. Nevertheless, there were still several initiatives to improve the circulation and visibility of Galician films inside and abroad.

Indicators of the economic crisis gathered in the report of the Galician Association of Cineclubs and the Council of Culture state an important attendance reduction at cinemas between 2007-2013 (349.891 viewers less), which it makes Galicia to be the penultimate community in attendance within the Spanish ranking. Precisely, it shows an annual average of 1.4 Galician people going to the cinema in front of the 2 people going in the state. In addition to it, three cinemas were closed from 2008 to 2012 and consequently there was arranged a less extensive and varied schedule. Aiming at reducing the negative effects of this situation, we detect three main aid lines to promote the exhibition of Galician cinema and contribute to the cultural diversity in Europe:



- a) Promote the projection of national cinema in Galicia
- b) Support the visibility of national cinema in the outside of the community and increase its internationalization (participating in film industry markets and film festivals)
- c) Introduce Galician cinema within the new diffusion networks

Therefore, the data collected in the project belongs to the “dark stage”, however, this period also took into consideration the need to promote the circulation of Galician cinema by the means listed previously.

Digital Cinemas project (2007-2011) was formed by movie theatre network of 190 Galician cinemas. This initiative supported 4,600 screenings of 274 Galician films along with many others from different countries and achieved a response of 215,000 viewers (Santomil, 2011: 6). The second part of this project was introduced in October 2014: 1,232 extra seats were added to the Galician public movie theatres as well as a new catalogue of 11 to 18 Galician films made from July 2013 onwards.

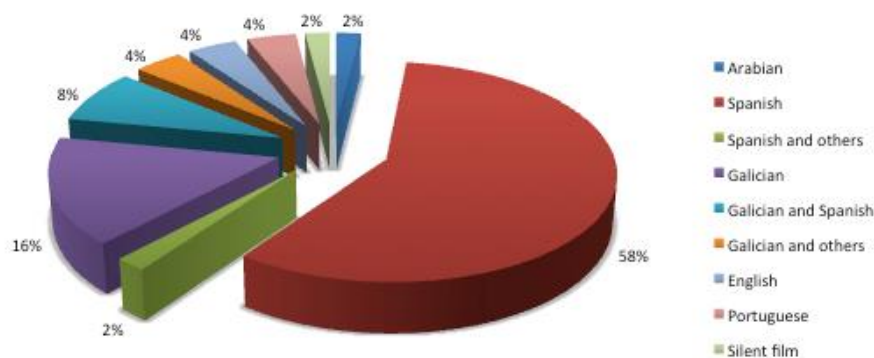
In addition to it, the Audiovisual Galician Agency promotes a free online screening service with a catalogue of 120 films and many thematic cycles to watch online through Flocos.tv (until 2011) and Canle.tv (since 2011) Internet Platforms.

Galicia promotional catalogue was created to spread out Galician films to Europe and Latin America, making them visible especially in film festivals (Fernández, 2013: 133). The initiative was possible thanks to the joint action between Audiovisual Consortium (later on turned into Agadic commission) and the private sector.

## 5.2. Galician language films production and distribution

Spanish is the privileged language in Galician films from 2008 to 2012. This is the main conclusion if we take into account a sample of long-features produced by consolidated and recognised producers and released in theatres or film festivals (Roca: 2014).

**Figure 12.** Original version of feature films released in 2008-2012

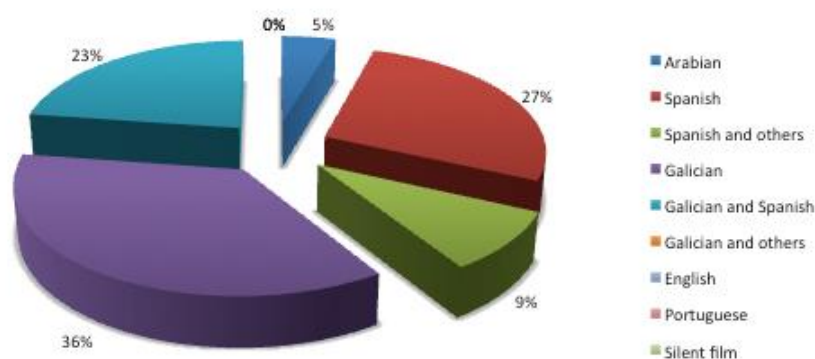


Sources: ICAA and CCG

Only 16% of the films have been shot in the Galician language, even if the Spanish appears just in 25% of the documentaries.



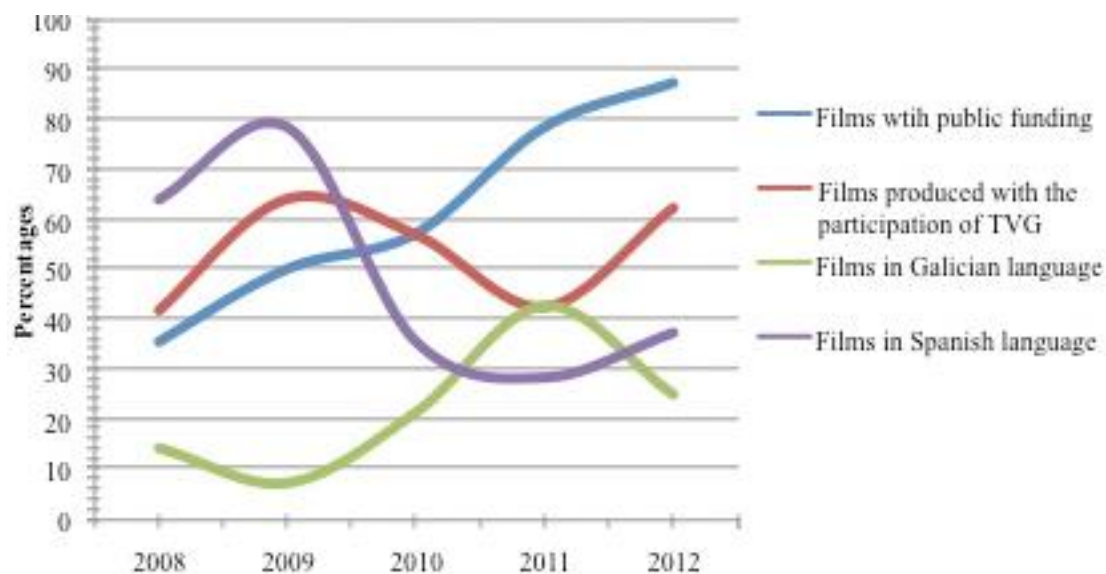
**Figure 13.** Original version of the documentary films released in 2008-2012



Sources: ICAA and CCG

Regarding public funding data and audience by language the results are revealing: Galician enterprises hardly participate in the distribution of films reflecting remarkable income and a high level of audience (Figure 14).

**Figure 14.** Correlation between language choice and funding distribution



Sources: ICAA and CCG. Prepared

**Table 2.** Box office results Galician features

FILM	BOX OFFICE (€)	AUDIENCE	DISTRIBUTION COMPANY	O.V.
<i>Celda 2011</i>	13.145.423,48	2.129.571	Paramount Spain S.L.	Spanish
<i>Los girasoles ciegos</i>	4.206.919,14	738.997	Alta Classics S.L. Unipersonal	Spanish
<i>También la lluvia</i>	3.906.066,18	620.481	Alta Classics S.L. Unipersonal	Spanish
<i>Al final del camino</i>	2.689.316,25	455.784	Warner Bros. Entertainment España S.L.	Spanish
<i>Gordos</i>	1.820.426,77	302.716	Alta Classics S.L. Unipersonal	Spanish
<i>Una palabra tuya</i>	1.136.715,59	197.343	Alta Classics S.L. Unipersonal	Spanish
<i>Agallas</i>	718.712,15	118.785	Sony Pictures Entertainment y Cia S.R.C.	Spanish
<i>Diario de Carlota</i>	483.360,28	83.765	Aurum Producciones S.A.	Spanish
<i>Invasor</i>	468.606,58	68.845	The Walt Disney Company Iberia	Spanish
<i>The way</i>	436.766,77	70.660	Castelao Pictures, S.L.	English
<i>Silencio en la nieve</i>	415.144,88	65.542	Alta Classics S.L. Unipersonal	Spanish
<i>Los muertos van deprisa</i>	403.605,00	63.438	The Walt Disney Company Iberia	Spanish
<i>Todo es silencio</i>	352.779,04	58.121	Tornasol Films	Spanish
<i>Atraco!</i>	344.449,23	59.034	Tornasol Films	Spanish
<i>Secuestrados</i>	328.678,07	53.583	Vértice Cine S.L.	Spanish
<i>18 Comidas</i>	310.638,92	49.427	Festival Films S.L.	Galician and others
<i>Lobos de Arga</i>	291.538,63	51.133	Vértice Cine S.L.	Spanish
<i>Santos</i>	282.547,11	56.335	The Walt Disney Company Iberia	Spanish
<i>La noche que dejó de llover</i>	280.152,80	44.738	Concept Producciones S.L.	Spanish
<i>Un buen hombre</i>	270.651,85	49.944	Alta Classics S.L. Unipersonal	Spanish
<i>Vivir para siempre</i>	215.765,57	37.760	Dreams Factory European, S.L.	English
<i>Proyecto dos</i>	214.339,33	36.868	The Walt Disney Company Iberia	Spanish
<i>Las imágenes perdidas. La otra mirada</i>	168.658,80	25.313	Cinema Indie Group S.L.	Spanish and others
<i>Pradolongo</i>	153.703,30	33.456	Vía Láctea Filmes. S.L	Galician
<i>Vilamor</i>	137.711,00	41.079	Vía Láctea Filmes. S.L	Galician

Sources: ICAA and CCG

As a conclusion, public policies for the distribution and visibility of Galician films should be strengthened. Nowadays, independent or emerging cinema is mostly being self-distributed, thus, there is a need to create and recover other ways of distribution in order to promote the accessibility and visibility of such cinema.

## 6. Conclusions

Disposing films in O.V as well as with subtitles within the current European cultural context it is considered an indispensable and undeniable issue to guarantee proper international circulation of films. Audiovisual policies in small nations “determine to a major extent national production capacity, destination of films and visibility in a highly competitive market” (Ledo et al.). The challenges of those policies, particularly in the three cases analysed, should take into account and follow the good practices introduced in Finland as eDCINEMA previous research has evidenced its good results in the strengthening of national cinema industry: from creativity to diversity and through visibility. Nevertheless, in the Spanish case, the lack of specific policies for the visibility of non hegemonic-language films causes bigger difficulties for the survival of Galician, Catalan or Basque films.

Catalonia has a film production per capita higher than any European country. Nevertheless, the screen quota for Catalan Cinema is under 10%. After analysing production, distribution and exhibition data and its policies, we can conclude that the weakness is in the distribution, exhibition and promotion of films; since they have not got a solid economical return. The Catalan Government approved the Catalan Cinema Law to improve the access to Catalan-language cinema in the movie theatres. However, the European Commission denounced this law as against free competition and it was unaccomplished finally. In addition to this, in 2014 the Catalan Government approved a project law based on a tax to the Internet providers in order to get funding and contribute to the digital presence of Catalan films. This tax has been denounced also to the Constitutional Spanish Court as a double paid tax. So, it can be said that Catalan distribution and exhibition policies are just circumscribed to the film festivals instead of to the mainstream diffusion of such films and leaves production to its fate in the last and most important stage of visibility. However, we should consider video-on-demand market as a current potential and profitable growing window; for instance, AraFilms is an online platform where every film can be screened, subtitled or dubbed into Catalan but still it does not guarantee the majority of films to be Catalan-language productions.

Therefore, the Catalan case analysis sets out a question: Is it possible to protect diversity and minority-language cinema within a legal framework (as EU) that considers such protection less important than free competence? The period of 2008–2012 was a lost opportunity to foster cultural diversity in Catalan cinema. Another important fact is that 2005 Unesco Convention about diversity disappeared from public documents concerning cinema. It stopped being an inspiring principle of Catalan film policies.

The Basque case analysis suggests a clear flowering of Basque film production due to the consolidation of specific public policies in the last decade. However, Basque-language cinema is a long way from becoming established. It cannot be forgotten that, after a period of sixteen years, it was not until 2005 that it was released the first feature fictional film fully shot in Basque language. Since then, there has been an average of two Basque-language films every year. So, over the past ten years employment more than anything has been created and professional have been trained. But it has been also a learning process for policymakers who, according to the recent policy results, should pay more attention to improve the promotion and distribution conditions of these films. In addition, the Basque Government needs to address the lack of interest Basque people have in Basque-language films and try to determine whether it is because of the bad quality of home production or their access and visibility constraints.

In this sense, television should be a tool to strengthen the structure muscle but also a means for normalising the use of language. ETB1 and ETB3 are the only autonomous channels, which broadcast exclusively in Basque. Nevertheless, most of the programming

hours are filled with sports, magazines and animated cartoons for children. In addition to this, the public television channel has dramatically decreased the number of Basque-dubbing hours: from 1,800 in the 90s to 375 in 2013. If one of the most important showcases of fictional content does not broadcast fiction in Basque, where is the Basque audience to turn if it wants to watch such content? What is more, how is the consumption of it to be encouraged?

In the case of Galicia, the involution of public policies has a lot to do with the visibility problems national cultural production suffers. The Galician socioeconomic strategy defined in the document RIS3 2014–2020 promotes the audiovisual sector transversally; it is involved within the “macro lines” designed for the cultural industries, which it blurs its strategic nature defined by the Galician Audiovisual Law 6/1999. This policy meets the current technological convergence context together with the economical crisis and puts national cinema in a delicate and risky situation. This research detects the need of promoting spaces for the visibility of Galician cinema by taking advantage of the digital technology and paying special attention to online platforms.

Since the creation of the Flocos.tv platform, the sector has been claimed the value this initiative had to gather and make a significant number of films (short films, documentaries, fictional features, etc.) available to the Galician people. In 2014 it was also recovered the specific scheme for distribution of films.

As a whole, this research clearly opens a continuing working line (Ledo et al.) on “national cinema” definition since this connotation neither responds to the old “state-cinema” nature nor its relation with small cinema production.

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